

CLEAN COPY OF REPLACEMENT CLAIMSIN THE CLAIMS:

A³ 4. (amended) The fiber optic cable of claim 1, said buffer tube layers having relatively smaller buffer tube wall thicknesses or outer diameters occupying the inner tube layer.

Please add the following new claims:

A⁴ 12. (new) A fiber optic cable system, comprising:
first and second fiber optic cables, each of said first and second fiber optic cables having respective optical fibers disposed in buffer tubes, said buffer tubes defining at least two layers respectively in said cables generally stranded about a center area of the respective fiber optic cables; said buffer tube layers defining a relatively inner layer of buffer tubes being closer to said center area, and an outer layer of buffer tubes being relatively further from said center area, said inner and outer buffer tube layers each comprising a respective helix value, said respective helix values within each said cable being substantially the same; and the inner layer of buffer tubes of said first optical fiber cable being optically connected to a outer layer of buffer tubes of said second fiber optic cable.

13. (new) The fiber optic cable system of claim 12, at least some of said optically interconnected optical fibers having essentially the same overall fiber length through said cables.

14. (new) The fiber optic cable of claim 9, said buffer tube having inner or outer diameters that vary from tube layer to tube layer.

15. (new) The fiber optic cable of claim 9, said buffer tube layers having relatively smaller buffer tube wall thicknesses or outer diameters occupying the inner tube layer.